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FLOOR DEBATE

March 13, 2006      LB 1069

SENATOR CUDABACK:      Thank you, Senator Synowiecki.      Senator Janssen, followed by Senator Baker.

SENATOR JANSSEN:      Thank you, Senator Cudaback, members of the Legislature.      Interesting discussion, Senator Byars.      I do have a few concerns here.      I know that in some areas in this state there are contract carriers who are providing this service now and have been up against what you might call some hard times, because of the fact there are so many other options that people can use.      I know the hospitals have vans and so on that will go pick people up and take them here and there.      And I'm trying to get up to speed on your bill, but were there any opponents or concerned contract carriers at the hearing?      Looking at the opponents, I couldn't see any here except for a Prince of the Road, whoever that was.      But I know that some of the taxi cab companies, and so on, especially in smaller communities, are providing a service to elderly people, taking them to the grocery store and so on, and loading their purchases up in their taxis and taking them home.      Are they at...are they getting reimbursed at the present time if they take someone, say, to the doctor, the...like, the taxis and so on?      Senator Byars, would you respond to that?

SENATOR CUDABACK:      Senator Byars, would you respond?

SENATOR BYARS:      Yes, I will.      They're being reimbursed at the state reimbursable rate of \$1.23 a mile, if the individual is state qualified.      If they aren't, if it's somebody who isn't qualified for one of the state programs, then the taxi cab is being reimbursed at exactly the same rate they would normally charge any fare.      And I know that there are agencies, like the area agencies on aging, that do provide services for...transportation services for certain people.      But again, there's no qualifications as far as income is concerned, as far as medical eligibility.      And the one thing that the committee heard, and we've heard for months as we prepared this, from people across the state, was, they have a very difficult time in many parts of the state, sometimes even the more populous parts of the state, in getting transportation at times when they need it.